

Justice Dept. Is Cool To Spy Probe on Hill

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As the government gears up for prosecution of alleged Moscow spy Aldrich H. Ames, Justice Department officials have tried to dampen congressional interest in immediately examining whether the CIA and FBI initially bungled their search for a CIA mole, administration officials and congressional sources said.

Officials from the department have told senior CIA officials and House and Senate lawmakers that anything that turns up in independent reviews of the government's conduct—either by the CIA or Capitol Hill—might be used in court by Ames's attorneys.

The officials have expressed concern that revelations from the probes might complicate or somehow undermine the prosecution, the sources said. They also have sought to bar CIA and FBI officials from providing Congress with any further information on events leading to the arrest of Ames and his wife, Rosario.

"We've asked them to work with us . . . to ensure that any inquiries they do undertake do not impact pending prosecutions," said Justice Department spokesman Carl Stern. He said any impression that Justice was trying to block any investigation "would be a misreading. It's not a blanket situation."

The protests, however, have fallen largely on deaf ears. The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence yesterday formally announced the start of a probe into why Ames was not arrested until nine years after the FBI first suspected a CIA mole, and the CIA inspector general also began a probe of the security and counterintelligence issues raised by the case.

According to a written statement by the chairman of the House panel, Rep. Dan Glickman (D-Kan.) and its senior Republican, Larry Combest (Tex.), the committee will look specifically at what damage the episode has caused national security and the intelligence community—U.S. officials have said this is key to Ames's fate.

"The committee expects nothing less than the complete cooperation of the intelligence community," the statement said. Congressional aides said Glickman decided to go ahead after staff disputed that the probe might



ALDRICH H. AMES

. . . Hill hearings might help his case

benefit Ames's attorneys. Still, the statement pledged that the committee would ensure its effort "does not interfere with" the Ames case.

A review of Justice's concerns by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence concluded the underlying legal issues are murky, and that Ames's attorneys might access the committee's work. It also predicted the administration would refuse to cooperate until the prosecution was completed.

As a result, committee chairman Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) and senior Republican John W. Warner (Va.) last week asked CIA Inspector General Frederick P. Hitz to step in. They reasoned that Hitz might be able to step more gingerly around the court case and collect more useful information than Capitol Hill.

Last week, some Senate aides expressed new reservations about the request after learning that Hitz wrote a memorandum on the scope of his probe for approval by CIA Director R. James Woolsey—a move that could be interpreted as an effort by Woolsey to limit the probe.

Senate sources said yesterday that Hitz had telephoned Capitol Hill to promise his inquiry would be free of interference. "We look forward to working with the oversight committees as we conduct our own reviews of a range of security and counterintelligence issues," said CIA spokesman Kent Harrington. "We are committed to make certain, however, that the process in no way interferes with the prosecution."